AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCIPLINE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS, FOR THE LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 13, 2004

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Background

In late January 2004, the consultant, Theodore H. Curry II, Professor and Director of the Michigan State University School of Labor and Industrial Relations met with Lansing Police Chief Mark Alley and Director of Human Relations Willard Walker. The consultant was asked to conduct an independent review of the disciplinary process and outcomes within the Lansing Police Department (LPD) and to provide recommendations on improvements that LPD might make. The core questions to be answered by the study were:

- What are the perceptions about the LPD discipline process and outcomes, primarily among LPD employees?
- Is discipline in fact imposed disproportionately for officers and employees of a different gender or ethnicity?
- Where discipline is imposed, are the penalties received similar when offenses of similar severity are committed?

Overview of Process

The discipline process and outcomes of the Lansing Police Department were examined in a two-part study. The major component of Part One of the study consisted of eighteen, two-hour focus group discussion sessions with groups of LPD employees – sworn and civilian, management and line employees. Additionally, a review of LPD relevant documents was conducted and interviews were held with key individuals. The second part of the study was a statistical analysis of discipline outcomes for the period January 1, 1998 to December 6, 2003.

Key Findings

While the study found widely held perceptions of inconsistency and unfairness in the discipline process which are important for the Department to address, the analysis of LPD discipline data leads to the following major findings:

- Minority sworn and civilian employees have more discipline complaints filed and sustained against them than do non-minority employees, given the percentage of minorities in the LPD workforce (Minorities constitute 20.8% of the LPD workforce employed during the study period, but received 35.3% of complaints filed and 39.0% of sustained charges);
- This disparity exists not only for employees with five or fewer years of service, a period during which LPD made significant strides in increasing the diversity of its workforce, but also for those minority employees with six or more years of service;
- There was no finding of a systematic relationship between gender and discipline;
- There does not appear to be a disparity in whether or not a complaint is sustained based upon race or gender; and
- There was no finding of a systematic relationship between the severity of discipline received based upon race or gender.

Recommendations

Major recommendations for changes in Lansing Police Department policies and practices include:

- Institute quarterly monitoring of discipline data,
- Develop a simplified rule structure build around core values,
- Adopt an offense/penalty matrix,
- Remove minor offenses from the Internal Affairs process,
- Enhance the role of supervisors in the discipline process with mandatory training and enhanced accountability, and
- Conduct needs assessment to validate and make precise the need for training and organizational development efforts concerning understanding, valuing, managing and working with a more diverse culture.